

DATE 24 DEC 1986

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Remarks

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 Executive Secretary

22 Dec 86

Date

**United States
Information
Agency**

Washington, D.C. 20541

Office of the Director

Executive Registry

86- 5814x



DEC 17 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable
William J. Casey
Director
Central Intelligence Agency

FROM: Charles Z. Wick *CW*
Director

SUBJECT: Views of Soviet Elites on Foreign Affairs

The attached memorandum from the USIA Office of Research reveals some telling divisions of opinion among Soviet elites. While Soviet officials, of course, tend to support government policies and propaganda, Soviet artists and intellectuals often resist official Soviet propaganda.

According to the estimates of Westerners steeped in Soviet society, half of the Soviet intelligentsia is thought to regard the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan as shameful.

Despite constant official propaganda to the contrary, about a third of the intelligentsia believe that the USSR seeks to achieve military superiority over the U.S. One fifth of officials and two fifths of the intelligentsia do not accept a basic tenet of Soviet propaganda -- that SDI is an offensive system.

The longer report on which this research memorandum is based is available directly from the Office of Research (485-2965).

DCI
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Research Memorandum

United States Information Agency
Washington, D.C. 20547

Office of Research

USIA

December 13, 1986

SOVIET ELITES DIVIDED ON KEY FOREIGN-AFFAIRS ISSUES

Summary

This memorandum summarizes a USIA research report on Soviet elite views of U.S. policy toward the USSR and other foreign-affairs issues. The longer report* is based on interviews with more than 50 Americans and West Europeans who have had extensive recent contact with the elites. Interviews were conducted from spring to fall 1986, the most recent in October shortly after the Chautauqua Institution-sponsored meeting in Latvia.

Among the key findings, according to surrogates' estimates:

- o The Soviet intelligentsia (intellectuals and cultural figures) is even more inclined to criticize the Soviet government's role in Afghanistan than are persons in the political establishment.
- o Only half the official elite is thought to support the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.
- o Despite constant official propaganda to the contrary, about a third of the intelligentsia believe that the USSR seeks to achieve military superiority over the U.S.
- o One fifth of officials and two fifths of the intelligentsia do not accept official propaganda that SDI is an offensive system.
- o Few are aware of Soviet research on strategic defense.

End summary

Elites Divide on Military, Afghanistan, and Other Issues

In surrogates' estimates, intellectuals and members of the creative professions, unlike officials, attach little importance to keeping up with or exceeding U.S. military might. A few intellectuals go so far as to strongly endorse President Reagan's efforts to build up U.S. power and to oppose Soviet expansionism, asserting that Soviet leaders only understand demonstrations of strength.

*Richard B. Dobson and Steven A. Grant, "Soviet Elites Split Over U.S. Policy and Other Foreign-Affairs Issues," USIA Research Report (R-23-86), December 1986. This report is available from the USIA Office of Research (485-2965).

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Artists and intellectuals are also more inclined to criticize their government's role in Afghanistan than are persons in the political establishment. Even at that, only half of officials and other members of the political establishment are thought to support Soviet government policy in Afghanistan. In contrast, one third of the artists and intellectuals are believed to endorse the regime's policy. Half of the intelligentsia is thought to regard the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan as "shameful." One quarter of officials are thought to agree to this strong statement. Because dissenting views are seldom expressed outside a close circle of family and friends, however, opposition to the war remains passive and fragmented.

Soviet elite members view the U.S. as the USSR's chief international competitor and consider negotiations with the U.S. on arms control issues extremely important. Artists and intellectuals are more likely than members of the political establishment to depart from official policy positions and to adopt a more favorable view of the U.S. and U.S. policy. According to surrogates' estimates, artists and intellectuals are much less likely than officials to feel that the U.S. and the USSR have basically conflicting interests. They are also less likely to regard the U.S. as an unreliable trading partner.

Many Elites Reject Key Points of Official Propaganda

According to a simulated poll, the great majority of elite members are thought to believe, in keeping with Soviet propaganda, that the U.S. seeks to achieve military superiority over the USSR. Most are also thought to accept the official view that the USSR does not seek superiority over the U.S. It is noteworthy, however, that despite constant official propaganda on this subject, about a third of all elites apparently believe that the USSR seeks to achieve superiority over the U.S.

Moreover, the regime has clearly not been fully successful in instilling the view that SDI is an offensive system. Surrogates estimate that about a fifth of the officials and two fifths of the intelligentsia do not accept a basic tenet of Soviet propaganda: that SDI is an attempt to gain a first-strike capability against the USSR. Even these critics, however, tend to regard SDI as undesirable, believing that it will stimulate the arms race and impose a heavy burden on the Soviet economy. Aside from arms specialists, however, few have knowledge of Soviet research on strategic defense.

Prepared by USIA Office of Research:
Steven A. Grant, Analyst

M-12/13/86

Approved by:
Nils H. Wessell, Director of Research
485-2965